DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 170 009 JC 790 319

AUTHOR DeCosmo, Richard; Baratta, Mary Kathryne
TITLE Using Community-Based Marketing Research to Increase Enrollments.
PUB DATE Apr 79
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Pre-AACJC Confernece of the National Council for Research and Planning, "Using Research and Planning in Marketing the Two-Year College" (Chicago, Illinois, April 27-28, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Bound Students; College High School Cooperation; Community Colleges; Community Involvement; *Junior Colleges; *Marketing; Needs Assessment; Program Planning; *Publicize; School Community Relationship; *School Holding Power; Student Characteristics; *Student Recruitment

ABSTRACT

The marketing approach used by Moraine Valley Community College (Illinois) was designed to expand the participation of underserved groups within its district at all levels of higher education. The plan was based upon the premises of equal access, provision of program information, setting of priorities among constituencies, program manageability, staff involvement in planning, plan monitoring, and simplicity. The specifics of the plan were designed around research regarding the participation rates of various groups within the district. Data were collected on current students, programs which attracted recent high school graduates, and participation rates of area high schools and various communities. Priorities were established and strategies were developed to increase participation in the college's programs and services. These strategies included: developing and distributing brochures for underenrolled programs; meeting with administrators, counselors, and faculty at high schools with low participation rates and arranging to speak to juniors and seniors at these schools; mailing program information to all high school vocational department chairpersons; visiting shopping centers; placing ads in local papers; opening an information center in the community with the lowest participation rate; and using mailers and signs. Enrollment increased by over 200 full-time equivalent students and nearly every target area showed increased participation. (Author/MB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED170009

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mary Kathryne Baratta

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

USING COMMUNITY-BASED MARKETING RESEARCH TO INCREASE ENROLLMENTS

by

Richard DeCosmo, Executive Vice President

Mary Kathryne Baratta, Director of Institutional Research

Moraine Valley Community College
10900 South 88th Avenue, Palos Hills, Illinois 60465

JC 790 319

National Council for Research and Planning
Pre-AACJC Conference on Using Research
and Planning in Marketing the Two-Year College

April 27-28, 1979

Abstract

The marketing approach used by Moraine Valley Community College was designed to expand the participation of those groups within its district who appeared to be underserved at the present time. Rather than entering into open competition with other colleges for enrollment, we chose to work at expanding the pool of college attendees. This would have the effect of eventually contributing to enrollment at all levels of higher education. The specifics of the plan were designed around research regarding the participation rates of various groups within our district. Priorities, or targets, were established and strategies were developed to increase the participation of people in the colleges' programs and services. Enrollment increased by over 200 full-time equivalent students and nearly every target area showed increased participation. For the 1978-79 year, the program has been expanded and research into attitudes, market competition and unmet needs will be conducted.

Using Community-Based Marketing Research to Increase Enrollments

With enrollments declining, the recruitment of new students is now a high priority among all types of institutions. "Marketing" has become the new concept for achieving enrollment stability and community colleges are now joining the marketing bandwagon. However, unlike most four-year colleges and universities the community college is community-based and thus serves a limited market.

At MVCC we took some marketing ideas and adapted them to serve us in accomplishing our mission to our people. Since our very premise for existence is to serve the community, our plan included measuring the needs, perceptions, preferences and satisfaction of the community at large.

Premises for Planning the Marketing Program

Before developing the marketing plan some premises were necessary upon which to build the plan. These premises included the following:

- Equal access for all its constituencies is an important goal for a community-based college. As a starting point, it was decided that the participation of various segments of the population would be indicative of the access each enjoyed.

- Information regarding presently provided programs and services is an important prerequisite to accessibility. Information leads to access. However, it was realized that information alone does not insure access. The first thrust for our marketing program, therefore, would be to provide certain constituencies with more information.

- Priorities had to be set among the college's constituencies so that the efforts and resources could focus more narrowly on those areas of greatest need and potential benefit. The highest priorities become the targets toward which staff efforts were directed.

- Program manageability within the context of present staff and service levels was a prime consideration. It was not possible to divert large sums of money for the marketing program, and it was unwise to substantially reduce ongoing, necessary services to free staff and funds for a marketing project. Thus, certain job assignments needed to be carefully examined to choose those individuals whose job assignments could be altered to included marketing efforts. With this approach it was felt that the program had a better chance to become a self-initiating, self-sustaining part of the day-to-day operation of the college. Therefore, we needed to live within budget, time and staff limitations.

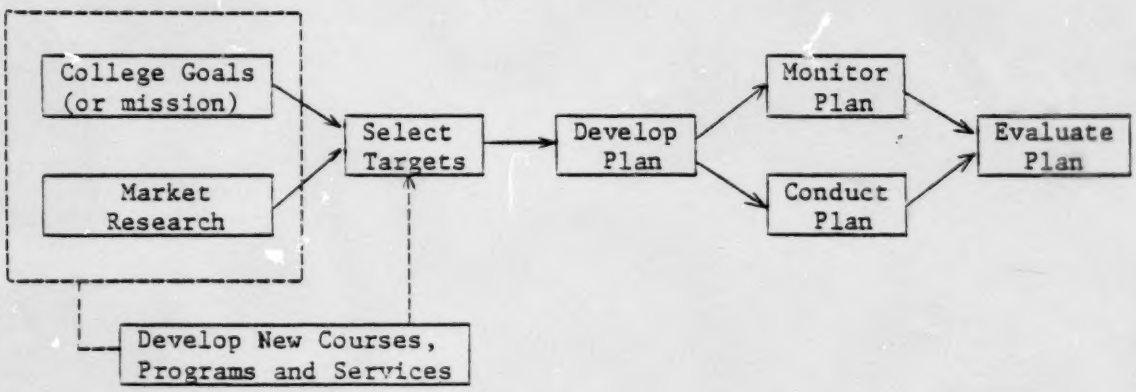
- Participants in the planning process would include those staff members who would be assigned to carry out the plan once adopted--staff support what they help create. Ideas could and would be sought outside this group, but the staff involved would participate fully in the decisions they were to carry out later.

- Monitoring the plan once developed would be essential to its success. Timetables and assignments should be clear and reasonable. The timetables should have frequent checkpoints. A project leader should be identified to keep the plan coordinated and on time. By monitoring the plan, we know when it must be modified to take advantage of special circumstances or when disaster needed to be avoided.

- Simplicity should be a hallmark of the plan. Anyone reading it should be able to understand what is to be done, when and by whom. The plan should be designated as a pilot program. It should test ideas and strategies. In fact, each succeeding plan should be looked at as a pilot for the next one, thus keeping flexibility in the forefront of our minds.

The Model

Once these premises were delineated, it was essential to construct a model for planning and executing the marketing program which would take these premises into account. The model shown below seemed to embody the desired concepts and was used to guide the thinking of the task force.



The college goals, or mission and market research lead to two separate steps. First, they lead to the selection of targets among existing college programs and potential students. Second, they lead to the identification of needs and interests which are not presently being served by the existing college programs, courses or services. These would then be developed and be considered as possible targets. Once the targets are identified, a plan for reaching those targets is devised. The plan is then implemented and monitored as it proceeds. The final step is evaluation according to the results achieved. Once the evaluation is completed it is used to modify all the elements in the chain.

The Initial Plan at MVCC

Data Collection About Markets

With the completion of the development of the model, MVCC initiated the data collection phase. MVCC was not aware of its major student market, therefore, the first step was to collect data regarding current students.

Two groups of currently enrolled students were identified: (1) students who graduated from high school in June, 1977 and were attending MVCC in fall, 1977 and (2) all other students currently enrolled in career or transfer programs. In order to analyze MVCC's drawing power from high schools, recent high school graduates were subdivided into three groups--graduates of local public high schools, graduates of local private high schools and graduates from high schools out-of-district. The total number of students graduated from each high school in June, 1977 was then used as a base to determine the high school participation rate. The participation rates ranged from a low of 5% to a high of 27%. By examining the data it was relatively easy to pick out those high schools where participation was substantially below what seemed appropriate.

Also, the type of programs in which these recent high school graduates enrolled was of interest. This information identified programs with a strong high school draw and those programs where the draw was much weaker. The range was very great and extended from zero students to 191 students. Analysis of this data also provided clues concerning the information available about individual Moraine programs at each high school.

In addition to examining the data regarding the participation rate from each high school, data regarding all other students was reported by community of residence, age, sex and program enrollment. It was discovered that the only helpful data for planning purposes was the data regarding community of residence and program enrollment. In order to determine the drawing power from each community, the adult population for each community was used as a base to calculate the MVCC participation for each community. The community participation rates ranged from 2.9% to 16.4%. As the data was examined, geographic regions were identified within which adjacent communities could be grouped. In this manner both regions and communities within these regions in which participation rates were poorest were identified and conveniently worked into the plan as targets.

Information was also gathered on the future size and characteristics of each market segments. It was noted that some communities were stabilized and that their population would be aging while some communities would be in a constant state of flux.

Building the Recruitment Plan

Based on the above information, the recruitment plan was divided into two components, the high school plan and the community plan. Since the recruitment model had a coordinated effort as a premise, a recruitment task force was commissioned to develop the plan. The task force, chaired by the Executive Vice President, was comprised of the Dean for Student Development, the Dean of Instruction, the Associate Dean of Vocational Education, the Associate Dean of Admissions and Records, the Director of Public Information and the Director of Institutional Research.

The task force suggested activities that might be beneficial for recruitment efforts based upon the data and consistent with the premises described earlier. These activities were then pulled together in a coordinated plan with task, responsiblity and completion dates identified. Once consensus

was achieved the plan was put into operation. It officially began on March 1, 1978. A staff member was selected to monitor the plan and to make certain that all deadlines were met. All recruitment efforts which needed modification had to have the approval of the coordinator. Modifications were required when deadlines were altered due to unforeseen circumstances. The individuals responsible for each part of the plan were cooperative and made every effort to finish their task ahead of schedule. Recruitment efforts spanned the time from March 1, 1978 to August 28, 1978, the day classes started for the fall 1978 term.

Recruitment Activities

Seven programs that were not attracting high school students were identified. These programs met the stipulations that they were applicable to recent high school graduates, were of high quality and could enroll additional students. Program brochures for the seven targeted programs geared to the high school audience were printed and distributed to the high schools where the participation rates in the selected programs were low. Ads highlighting the selected programs were also placed in high school newspapers.

In the four local public high schools where participation rates were extremely low, MVCC administration met with high school administrators, counselors and faculty to explain new and revised programs. During this meeting, plans were also set up for MVCC staff members to speak with high school juniors and seniors regarding MVCC offerings. Additionally, a program was started whereby members of MVCC's technology faculty could visit various technology classes at these same local high schools.

A letter and the newly printed program brochures were mailed to all high school vocational department chairpersons inviting their vocational students to visit MVCC. Several arranged visits to the college campus.

The community plan was a bit more difficult to develop because the audience was not as easily captured. The community plan entailed: visits to shopping centers in communities with low participation rates, program news releases in all community newspapers, general news releases in targeted community newspapers, the opening of an information center in the community with the lowest participation rate, a bank mailer outlining MVCC offerings and services to depositors with banks in the target communities and advertising fall registration by means of moving signs located at all local banks with such signs.

Data Collection About Students and Former Students

While recruitment plans were being initiated, other facets of the marketing program were being implemented. The needs, perceptions, preferences and satisfaction of our current students and former students were analyzed. Built into this phase of our marketing system are three major data collection phases: a system of student follow-up, program audits and retention information. Surveys are mailed to transfer graduates, occupational graduates, zero credit earned nonpersisters, forty-five or more credit hours earned nonpersisters, employers of occupational graduates and to students three years after their MVCC graduation.

Analysis of this data provides MVCC with information regarding evaluation of services, educational outcomes, training received and the needs and interests of clientele already served. This information is used to modify services and/or add programs and courses to meet student needs.

Program audits are conducted yearly. The CIPP model is used as a basis to collect information regarding: manpower trends and projections, programs in adjoining districts, program scope, objectives and accreditation, staff composition and qualification, student characteristics, cost, facilities, equipment and supplies, instructional modes, administrative support, course scheduling, staff roles and relationships, faculty evaluations, evaluation of support services, graduates, courses, employment status of graduates and employer evaluation of graduates. This information aids MVCC in planning and decision-making regarding the program, upgrading of program personnel, improvement of the program for students and it allows for accountability of expenditures.

Successful recruitment without successful retention is a revolving door that eventually saturates the market and generates a poor image for the institution. To provide the student with a measure of success is a major goal of our retention program. Data is collected regarding course completions, program completions and nonpersisters. Again the information is used as a base to design and/or modify programs to aid the student in his education. A retention plan is developed yearly and implemented that is similar in design to the recruitment plan.

Data About Future Students

Information is also collected from high school seniors each year. The data provides MVCC with information regarding the needs and interests of graduating seniors, MVCC's image, reasons for selecting college and where high school seniors enroll to further their education. The information is used for program planning and recruitment activities.

Planned for this fall is the second component of our major data collection phase about future students--a community needs assessment.

Staff Information

Finally we believe that everyone employed by MVCC is a part of our marketing and recruitment effort. To keep employees informed of our progress, a newsletter is distributed titled "A Report on: Recruitment and Retention." The newsletter provides a medium for us to inform members of our staff of what we are currently doing in the area of recruitment and retention, what we have planned for the future and how well we have done in the past. It also enlists their support and offers specific suggestions on how they can participate.

Results of Marketing Program

The results of the recruitment efforts were evaluated during the fall 1978 semester. An analyses of enrollment for the fall 1978 semester indicated

an increase of 200 F.T.E. In fact, MVCC had surpassed its highest F.T.E. enrollment which occurred for fall, 1976 by 103. The fall, 1978 semester also showed an increase of 267 students over the previous fall enrollment.

When the data was analyzed by high school and program, it showed that programs that were targeted for recruitment efforts had increased enrollments. Also, high schools that were targeted had increased participation rates.

When the retention data was analyzed programs that were targeted for recruitment efforts had increased retention rates. Other efforts at retention were not as easily measured but we feel that we have moved a step in the right direction as far as aiding students in their educational endeavors.

MKB/st

Bibliography

Berry, L.L. and Bruce, H.A. "Marketings Crucial Role for Institutions of Higher Education." Atlanta Economic Review, July-August, 1977.

Campbell, W.E. and Larkin, P. Marketing: Helping Colleges and Universities Cope with the Changing Postsecondary Educational Needs of Society. A paper presented at the 18th Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research, Houston, Texas, May, 1978.

Engel, J.; Fiorillo, H. and Cayley, M. Market Segmentation: Concepts and Applications. New York, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972.

Gorman, W.P. "Marketing Approaches for Promoting Student Enrollment in Higher Education Institutions." College and University, Spring, 1974.

Huddleston, T. "Marketing: The Applicant Questionnaire." College and University, Vol. 51, No. 2, Winter, 1976.

Kotler, P. Marketing for Non-Profit Organizations. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1976.

Leach, E. "Implementing the Marketing Process." Community and Junior College Journal, December-January, 1977-1978.

May, A.J. Marketing Communications for Higher Education. A paper presented at a workshop in Higher Education, Kent, Ohio, July 26, 1978.

McAdams, T. "Student Recruitment: The Hard Sell?" College and University, Vol. 50, No. 3, Spring, 1975.

Nickens, J. "Community College Dropout Redefined." College and University, Vol. 51, No. 3, Spring, 1976.

Sternberg, R.J. and Davis, J.C. "Student Perceptions of Yale and It's Competitions." College and University, Vol. 53, No. 3, 1978.

Sullivan, D. The Carelton Application Pool: An Empirical Study. In Northwest Area Foundation, Choice or Chance: Planning for Independent College Marketing and Retention. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Northwest Area Foundation, 1976.

Tartaglia, G.R. A Marketing Strategy for Successful Recruiting in a Community College. A paper presented at the AERA/SIG for Community/Junior College Research, Springfield, Illinois, July 13-14, 1978.

Vavaek, M. "Marketing: It's Ok-We're Ok." Adult Leadership, December, 1976.

...Y OF CALIF.
...Angeles

JUN 15 1979

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES